The Middlebury Campus

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MIDDLEBURY MOURNS THE DEATH OF LIA SMITH '26

COLE CHAUDHARI/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Students hung a banner with the message "We miss her" outside of Ross Dining Hall, referencing their classmate's passing last week.

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Editor in Chief

Lia Smith '26 has passed away at Middlebury College. She was found dead in the afternoon on Thursday, Oct. 23 by Vermont State Police (VSP) in a field near The Knoll, the college's organic farm on the west end of campus.

A news release from VSP on Friday, Oct. 24 confirmed her identity and death by suicide. Smith had been reported missing on Sunday, Oct. 19 after having not been seen since that Friday and a large-scale search involving the FBI was launched to find her.

Smith, 21, was a double computer science and statistics major from Woodside, California, having attended Sacred Heart Preparatory School there. She had competed in previous seasons as a diver on the Middlebury Women's Swimming and Diving team and was a member of the Chess Club, Japanese Club (J Club), and Women in Computer Science. She was outspoken about her experience as a transgender student athlete, advocating for transgender rights.

College President Ian Baucom shared the news of Smith's death in an email to the college community on Saturday morning.

"Over the past few days, I have learned what a remarkable person Lia was…" Baucom wrote. "She was a gift to us and we are so grateful that she was–and will always remain–a member of our Middlebury family."

"I have spoken with Lia's family to express my heartbreak. As president, and far more as a fellow parent, I ache for them. This is a profound loss that nobody should have to endure," he wrote.

Baucom thanked the Student Affairs staff of the college for their support during the period of Lia's disappearance, the Middlebury Police Department who led the

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Custodians, librarians face outsized workloads, low morale due to understaffing

By HUGO ZHANG
News Editor

Although Covid-19 pandemic restrictions on campus ended over two years ago, the college's staffing has not climbed back to pre-pandemic levels, and several departments, including Custodial Services, the Davis Family Library, Catering and Dining are struggling with unmanageable workloads and burnout. According to staff, much of this struggle has been caused by the college's poor human resource policies.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic began, the college has lost over 30 custodians, and several positions have been eliminated, custodial staff said. The remaining staff have been cross-trained to multitask and take on the workloads of those who left.

The custodians that spoke with The Campus for this story did so under the condition of anonymity due to fear of facing retaliation from supervisors.

While Covid-19 restrictions were in place, the college provided custodians with an additional $120 every two weeks — $1.15 extra hourly — to help compensate for their increased workloads after 30 staff members left. They were

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VERMONT COOKIE LOVE OPENS NEW LOCATION DOWNTOWN

By SAGE KELLER
Contributing Writer

Vermont Cookie Love opened its second location on 40 Main Street, the former Chim Chimney location, in downtown Middlebury on Oct. 23, bringing its signature warm cookies and award-winning creemees close enough to campus that one student playfully called it "dangerous."

The family-owned business began as a vendor at the Shelburne Farmers' Market in 2009, eventually expanding into their "Love Shack" location on Route 7 in North Ferrisburgh, Vt. The company has now ventured farther south, adding Middlebury to its growing customer base. The new location is open Wednesday through Sunday from 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

Owner Matt Bonoma said the decision to open a new location in Middlebury was strategic. Unlike their North Ferrisburgh location, which operates as window service only, the Middlebury shop, which includes a seating area with a more open, spacious interior, offers something new.

"Middlebury is an interesting chance to try something different where people are able to come in, sit at a table, jump on the Wi-Fi, do some homework, come in from the cold in the winter or from the hot in the summer," Bonoma said. "It's going to let us develop our business model a little bit."

Bonoma added that the new location was ideal for expansion.

"We loved that Middlebury's close enough to where we are that I think a lot of people are already familiar with Cookie Love, but it's far enough away that we don't have two businesses next to each other," Bonoma said.

The shop's opening day saw an overwhelming turnout, with lines that snaked through the shop and out the front door, drawing many for a first taste.

Jayda Murray '26 nearly skipped the grand opening after seeing the crowds through the store's windows.

"When we went there, it was very crowded," Murray said. "The line was to the door from the register, so it was very packed in there."

Another attendee, Kiki Dyer '29 described the atmosphere on opening day as spirited.

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Large class sizes impact faculty, student experience

QINLAN WANG/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Larger departments at Middlebury, like the Economics department, have had to improvise new systems of assigning students to required classes due to increased class sizes.

By KAI ARROWOOD & MET LY
Staff Writer & Contributing Writer

Between 2019 and 2025, Middlebury's undergraduate population rose from 2,580 to 2,653 students, according to data from the college's Office of Assessment and Institutional Research. Enrollment saw large surges after students took time off during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions in 2020 and then returned to campus in 2021 and 2022, causing a record peak of 2,858 on campus students in the fall of 2021.

While overall numbers have calmed since the largest surges, the pressure on academic departments caused by these increases has not ended, especially in increasingly popular majors that require prerequisite courses, such as Economics and Psychology.

Middlebury's website claims that the average class size is 16, a boasted norm that does not reflect the experience of many students and professors. First year seminars are capped at 15

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IN LIGHT OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT VACANCIES, FACULTY REVISIT IMPORTANCE OF A LITERARY DEGREE

QINLAN WANG/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

After this academic year, the English department will have retired three faculty members, with none of their positions being filled.

By **MAYA ALEXANDER**
Editor at Large

With several English Department faculty on leave, on associate status or recently retired, the department is facing staffing concerns, and no replacement positions have been approved by the Educational Affairs Committee (EAC). According to Professor of American Literature Brett Millier, who retired last spring, the department's proposal for her replacement was denied.

These vacancies are occurring at a time when the value of an English degree is being questioned more broadly, a concern that Millier and Professor Emeritus of English and Creative Writing Jay Parini share as they retire alongside Professor of English Cates Baldridge. In the past two decades, many U.S. liberal arts colleges and universities have shifted focus towards STEM subjects.

"In the 21st century, many if not all liberal arts colleges and universities, including Middlebury, have shifted curricular and financial resources away from the humanities (including the study of literature) in favor of STEM subjects and the social sciences," Millier wrote in an email to the Campus.

Isla Mitchell '26, a double English and Economics major, expressed that she believes her degree in economics will allow her to get a job more easily after graduating this coming spring, which she called an "unfortunate reality."

"I love both English and Economics and I love being in both majors, but now that I'm a senior and looking to get my first job, I know that it's likely that [I'm more] prepared to go into something that relates more to economics. English literature has given me certain skills and given me certain passions, but ultimately that's probably not where I'm going to find a job as easily," Mitchell said.

Many faculty in humanities fields are frustrated and saddened by the declining place of their work in American culture, according to Millier. The number of students in English classes has also shrunk drastically, and with fewer professors available, only so many courses can be offered at once.

"Like every English department in the country, we've seen fewer English majors each decade. Students gravitate to economics and computer science these days. One doesn't see large classes much these days, in the literature classes. That reflects a change in the culture. The old fashioned English major has disappeared," Parini wrote in an email to The Campus.

The department has been forced to look introspectively and think about the future of literary study.

"At one end are people who say teaching classics of literature is by nature elitist and exclusive and we should find other works in other media to teach. At the other are people who believe that the analysis of difficult texts teaches timelessly valuable skills — critical reading, writing compelling arguments, not to mention empathy and open-mindedness," Millier wrote.

Not only has funding shifted away from literary studies, but college professors nationwide have reported declines in students' abilities and willingness to read on their own. As was discovered in the Zeitgeist 7.0, almost double the percentage of Middlebury students reported breaking the Honor Code compared to 2019. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) has increased every year since 2023, a reality that the English Department has to grapple with.

Ellie Trinkle '26, a double creative writing and film major, believes that although AI poses a real threat to writing and thinking critically, the English Department has not altered their teaching styles.

"I've talked to some professors in the department, like Jay Parini, who has told me about how he thinks that when you use AI you lose the sense of an individual's voice completely, and you don't get that personal voice that comes across in your creative writing that you do when you are getting the actual person's voice," Trinkle said. "A lot of my professors recognize AI as a threat, but I also think they often attempt to reassure my classmates and I about how AI can never write a story, poem, a novel, et cetera, that is as compelling as a student can or as a real person can."

This moment of uncertainty for the English Department has led faculty members to ask questions and revisit what it means to study, read and write literature.

"My own view is that we need to do some hard thinking and ask important questions," Parini wrote. "What is the point of literature? How does an English major prepare a student for life? How do we sort through the various claims for priority among authors, schools of writing, and approaches to criticism? How do we help in the work of teaching students to think critically? What role will AI play in all of this? The questions keep multiplying, and they're all good questions that need intelligent answers."

Millier wrote that the English Department is continuing to discuss which positions they will propose to the EAC this upcoming cycle. The deadline to propose positions is in January.

Editor's Note: Ellie Trinkle '26 is the Senior Arts & Culture Editor.

Middlebury mourns the death of Lia Smith '26

COURTESY PHOTO/ MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

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investigation and the Vermont State Police for helping in the search, in addition to Public Safety.

"I know that this is a wrenching time," Baucom's email reads. "Please continue to extend care and compassion to one another and to yourselves."

In the lobby of Hepburn Hall, the dorm where Smith lived her first year on campus, students have created a small memorial with a photo of her on a bulletin board surrounded by hand-written messages. On Thursday, Nov. 7 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Anderson Freeman Center (AFC), J Club and the Southeast Asian Society (SEAS) will host a joint remembrance event honoring Smith and fellow J-Club member Ivan Valerio '26, who passed away in Nov. 2023. The event will feature Filipino and Japanese food cooked by classmates and opportunities to write letters and fold origami cranes in the two students' memory.

Baucom wrote in his email that the college will plan opportunities for the community to gather and remember Smith.

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CUSTODIANS, LIBRARIANS FACE OUTSIZED WORKLOADS, LOW MORALE DUE TO UNDERSTAFFING

QUINLAN WANG/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

A lack of custodial staff has seen current employees of the college's facilities division extending themselves beyond their normal duties to fill in for empty positions.

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told this benefit would last until 80% of positions were filled, but ended it after hiring 10 custodians and eliminating the 20 remaining positions. This forced custodians to take on more work than they did before the pandemic.

"From where it was before Covid, we're down to probably 30, 40 custodians," a custodian Team Liaison, a position that helps organize the custodial staff teams, said.

The Team Liaison shared that the college hired five custodians from a third party organization during the summer for 10 weeks, and did not choose to maintain those positions during regular semesters.

"[The college] cross-trained everybody, so everybody can basically do any job on campus," another custodian said. "As they lose a person, they just divide [the work] up or just add it to somebody else's work."

As part of the budget cuts announced in the spring, faculty and staff retirement match rates were reduced from 15% to 11%. Custodians also expressed concern over the potential reduction of Combined Time Off (CTO). CTO functions like paid vacation time that accumulates automatically: Every two weeks, custodial staff earn some hours of paid leave, which is deposited into their CTO "bank." If an employee takes one or two weeks off, they will still return with additional hours of CTO accrued.

Custodians said the benefits Middlebury has offered in the past are part of the reason they have stayed at the college as long as they have. With some of these benefits having been reduced, they are wondering if more are at risk and finding less compelling incentives to stay.

"We're not sure what's going to happen," the custodian said. "But [the college is] looking at cuts in every direction, and it seems like we're the ones suffering."

"Last year, they didn't even give us anything for Christmas," the custodian said. "I'm not really looking for anything, but every employer usually does something. That was the first time in my life an employer didn't give anything for Christmas."

The understaffing not only impacts the morale, but also forces custodians to lower the high standard of cleaning they used to follow. One custodian pointed to the example of dust just above a doorframe that they previously had time to wipe off.

"Now we just don't have the time to do dusting like we used to," they said. "They put so much on us, that you just don't have the time to do it all."

Their jobs are further complicated by the transition from the Language Schools on campus in the summer to the regular fall semester. At the end of each summer, different language programs have different departure dates, and the move-out process often coincides with some regular students arriving early. This makes cleaning one building at a time difficult, obliging custodians to return to buildings multiple times to accommodate them.

"The changeover between language school and regular school coming in is quick, and we don't do full cleans," the custodian said. "We don't have the time to do that, because it's just there's so much to do."

"Some of the houses we have to stop at three, four times and clean one room this day, another this day next week," the Team Liaison added.

Staffing in the Davis Family Library has also not bounced back from its pre-Covid-19 levels. The library has seen significant turnover in recent years after several librarians left, citing what they saw as flaws in the "skill matrix" pay system implemented in 2022. The system determines pay based on market data from the previous fiscal year at other "peer" institutions outside of Vermont and places hard caps on their salaries.

During the pandemic, the college permanently cut one librarian position, and earlier this year it froze several research librarian hiring processes as part of its budget-saving measures. According to Terry Simpkins, director of discovery and access services, the library has managed to hire for some vacant positions, though staffing levels are still not what they were before.

"We had approval to hire two more librarians that were frozen and then one of them was unfrozen," he said. "And now our dean retired early, so we're down three staff members from [Covid-19]."

Former Dean of the Library Mike Roy took the early retirement incentive offered to staff in the spring to cut costs. Staff members of at least 55 years of age who have worked at the college for at least 10 years qualified, leading 53 employees to take the incentive and leave their jobs.

For non-research librarian roles, the library has been able to improve capacity through the internal promotion of non-librarian staff members.

"Now we have had some internal promotions of staff members to librarians, so the number of librarians has increased," Simpkins said.

The closure of Armstrong Library, the upcoming relocation of the Language Schools at Bennington College in 2027 and the impending closure of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS) have and will continue to increase the workload for an already strained library staff.

"There's going to be a lot of work to do with the library materials that we have at those places," he said. "I doubt very much that we will bring those materials here, because at this point with bringing in the Armstrong materials, [Davis is] now full again. But we will have to make decisions about what we have in those libraries at some point."

Anticipating the closure of MIIS, the administration has begun reducing Monterey-based staff, which means library staff in Vermont will likely have to provide additional support in addition to their own workloads.

"Two members at Monterey have been laid off as of January 2026, so they're going to be downstaffing and their library is going to be closing," he said. "We'll have to help with that, so it's really that kind of thing that is impacting us as much as the staffing."

Faculty and staff publicly protested the budget cuts last May and called for the closure of MIIS. While the college administration announced in late August that they would sell the Institute, it has not publicly discussed reversing the cuts.

Large class sizes impact faculty, student experience

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students per class, but in other classes, students enter rooms of around 30 students, in some cases rising to 50 or 60. Students continue to struggle for seats in their desired classes, join waitlists with dozens of their peers and attend lectures larger than expected for a seminar style.

According to the institutional data, the college granted approximately 50% more Economics degrees in 2025 than 2021, rising from 97 to 147 department graduates in those respective years. The number of graduating Spanish and Psychology majors doubled, respectively increasing from 10 to 20 and 29 to 65 in the same period.

Concerns over class sizes from over a dozen students led the Student Government Association (SGA), to meet with Faculty Council last year to address the issue, according to Jeffrey Teh '28, SGA speaker of the senate. Teh said that faculty and students shared similar frustrations. Large class sizes can hinder the personal relationship between students and professors, relegating student-instructor conversations to teaching assistants or smaller discussion sections.

Teh raised the example of Professor of Political Science Jessica Teet's Authoritarian Politics class. The class had 18 students when it was taught in fall 2021, and last fall taught 54 students, nine greater than its target capacity of 45. It is common for professors to allow more students into classes than allotted by the original enrollment cap.

Megan Mayhew Bergman, assistant professor of English, emphasized the importance of small class sizes in a workshop-driven class — an opportunity that has become more rare.

"I think there's a certain intimacy and trust in dialogue that can happen in a small class," Bergman said. "Sometimes we can offer that in our more advanced classes, but generally, I think we're all walking the line of, 'are we serving the right number of students?'"

Introduction to Creative Writing is the only prerequisite for more advanced creative writing courses, making it sought-after by English majors and aspiring student writers. Creative writing courses at the college's Bread Loaf Campus have 10 students, while Introduction to Creative Writing hosts 22. The classroom is crowded, Bergman said, with only one chair to spare. Every semester the waitlist for the class hovers at around 20.

Introduction to International and Global Studies (IGS), a requirement for all prospective IGS majors, leans on the larger side. This year the number of students per lecture has decreased from 80 to 60, making it slightly more manageable for professors Amit Prakash and Shinkyu (James) Lee to grade and engage with students.

"It's only when we subdivide the class that we have the space for people to really articulate themselves, for us to get to know them, and vice versa," Prakash said.

IGS is a particularly discussion and writing-heavy class, so the majority of student participation occurs in discussion sections. Although Prakash and Lee try to engage students during lectures by splitting up the larger group into smaller discussion groups, it remains a challenge to prevent one-way teaching.

"Teaching is a relational practice, so we need to have the back and forth as well, right?" Prakash said. "It has to be a dialogue."

Language departments are also heavily reliant on smaller classes for efficient pedagogy. Jonah Reynolds '28 expressed his frustrations with the large size of his Spanish class.

"[There's] such a divide already between native and non-native speakers that we often feel an internal pressure to be precautious with our thoughts," Reynolds said. "This is worsened when there are 20 students in a course that should have significant discussion and certain people hardly ever speak as a result."

For professors, large classes make relationship cultivation and grading a much lengthier process.

"I think when we're overloaded and harried, it's hard," said Bergman. "When we have a larger class size and grading is more difficult, it's harder to offer that depth."

"When you assign a paper and give 80 comments and midterms and another paper, it adds up. Even 60 is quite demanding," Prakash said.

Some departments, like Economics, have adopted strategies to manage ongoing enrollment pressures to allocate limited class seats. In a department-wide email, Professor and Economics Department Chair Andrea Robbett outlined the centralized waitlist system used for all non-introductory Economics and International Politics and Economics courses. Instead of a first-come, first-served model, students complete a single survey after registration closes, allowing seats to be reallocated based on academic need, such as major or graduation requirements. Seniors and Senior Febs can also reserve seats in advance through a departmental survey for 400-level seminars. Professors from the Economics Department declined to comment on this system.

As part of the budget cuts announced last spring, the college committed to increasing target enrollment from 2,500-2,600 to between 2,600-2,650. While reaching this target would mark an overall decrease in students on campus from the current number, it would sustain a substantial increase since pre-pandemic numbers. No plans have been announced to hire more faculty overall to accommodate this change.

Vermont Cookie Love opens new location downtown

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"The energy was amazing," Dyer said. "It was packed, but everyone was so excited to finally have Cookie Love here. It felt like a campus event," Dyer said.

Even Bonoma was taken aback.

"It way exceeded my expectations," Bonoma said. "I didn't know if we would have two people show up or 200 people show up, and the four days that we were open so far, we were about as busy as we could be…We were a little bit hanging on for dear life to make sure that we had cookies and ice cream to sell to everyone, and it was fabulous."

Cookie Love's appeal lies in its creative menu, featuring cookies with names like "Addicted to Love" (mocha), "Fall in Love" (pumpkin), and "Puppy Love" (peanut butter).

"The names themselves are just beautiful. They're poetic," attendee Kennedi Magaoay '29 said, adding that the shop also offers frozen cookie dough, maple lattes and various ice cream options.

Bonoma said that Middlebury students are central to their vision for the business' new location, including employment, as the shop has already hired several students from the college, with plans to employ more.

"We want to really be a part of the community that we operate in, so that includes the broader Middlebury community, but obviously very much includes Middlebury College," Bonoma said. "We're hoping over time that we can integrate in various ways with the college, whether it be parents can order a gift box of cookies to drop off the same day during exam periods or discounts for Middlebury students on certain days of the week."

Students also see the business as a gathering place for the college community.

"It's a place for community, because you can grab a bunch of cookies with a bunch of friends," Magaoay said. "It's just a place where you can gather and be a part of a community inside of the community. That's what this college is about. I feel like it's so special."

Dyer agreed. "This is exactly what Middlebury needed."

Bonoma noted that the Middlebury Cookie Love location will maintain their current menu initially, but they intend to adapt based on community feedback.

"Over time, we're going to take a look at what the community is asking us for in terms of products," Bonoma said. "We might start selling scones that we sell frozen baked, for instance. During the summer, we might try to open earlier on Saturdays so that we are syncing up with the farmers' market."

KATRINA SCHWARZ / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The new Cookie Love location has become instantly popular amongst students.

For now, the focus remains on perfecting their existing offerings.

"We want to make sure that we can do the existing menu and do it really, really well," Bonoma said.

"I love working with our customers first and foremost," Bonoma said, summing up what makes the business special. "People are always so sweet and excited to be there, and we just want this to be a place where people come when they need a little sweet treat."

SPOOKTACULAR RETURNS TO "HAUNT" MAIN STREET

By LANGAN GARRETT & ELISABETH DELLIT
Staff Writer & Contributing Writer

Children dressed as witches, skeletons, princesses and superheroes filled the Middlebury Town Green on Sunday, Oct. 26, before marching through downtown Middlebury for their annual Spooktacular.

Nearly every shop along Main Street greeted parade-goers with treats, handing out candy, stickers and even bookmarks. Many owners dressed up, from classic witches to elaborate costumes including a full "Wizard of Oz" cast. One volunteer went as far to paint her face a sparkling gray in full commitment to the Tin Man costume.

Nanci Dunn, the owner of boutique gift shop Sweet Cecily, has led the band of children on their parade route for over a decade. Described as the resident witch, Dunn wears a witch outfit and holds a black, sparkly wand every year.

"My hair just keeps getting grayer and grayer, and I've had kids say to me, 'Is that your real hair?!' and I tell them it is," Dunn said.

As the town's primary Halloween celebration, Spooktacular holds a special place in Dunn's heart. For her, watching the kids in Middlebury grow up over the years has been a source of great joy.

"I've been doing this so long, and there are some kids that I recognize and they recognize me," Dunn said.

The Spooktacular is organized by Kelly Flynn and Kathryn Torres, the co-directors of the Better Middlebury Partnership (BMP).

"Together with a wonderful network of volunteers, local businesses (SHAWS are our candy sponsor, so huge gratitude and shout out to them!) Parks & Rec, the police and fire departments and our town team, we coordinate many of Middlebury's community events throughout the year — including Spooktacular," Flynn and Torres said in a joint email to the Campus.

The Middlebury Police and Fire Departments could both be seen directing traffic for the parade, keeping the children and their families safe. Members of 92.1 WVTK, Addison County's local radio station, broadcasted live from the green to bring the community together.

92.1 WVTK's Local Sales Manager Spencer Lieberman was dressed as Egon Spengler from Ghostbusters.

"[It's so nice] being able to celebrate together, having a place where everyone can come together and have fun," Lieberman said. "We've got some good music going, and there are kids getting dressed up!"

The sentiment was echoed by Flynn and Torres.

"In a world that often moves too fast, Spooktacular gives everyone a reason to pause and simply enjoy being part of the community — outdoors, in costume, surrounded by smiles," Flynn and Torres shared in their statement. "It's a reminder that small-town traditions matter and that the joy of childhood and imagination is something we can all share."

Every year, Flynn and Torres take into consideration comments and feedback from the town. In order to improve the event for all families, they worked this year to make the event even more child-friendly.

"One consistent note we've heard is around keeping the parade moving smoothly, which we've worked on by setting clear guidelines for candy distribution and timing," Flynn and Torres wrote. "We've also heard from parents who appreciate having rest and gathering spaces nearby, so we've focused more on making it welcoming and easy to navigate for families with young children."

With all the decorated shop windows, festive Halloween touches and the bounty of treats, the children of Middlebury experienced the full breadth of autumn festivity.

ELISABETH DELLIT / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The Middlebury Spooktacular featured a breadth of Halloween festivities such as fun costumes, crafts, and candy.

"[The Spooktacular] recalls those old-fashioned small-town Halloweens where everyone knows everyone, and safety, joy, and creativity take center stage," Flynn and Torres wrote.

Cyclists spin connection in Middlebury Slow Rollers chapter

By MILES BORNE
Contributing Writer

On Wednesday evenings throughout the summer and fall, a line of cyclists have gathered outside Little Seed Coffee Roasters on Merchants Row to embark on a bike ride. At 6 p.m., the group starts their ride together, cruising along backroads and quiet trails for what has quickly become one of the town's most popular activities.

The Middlebury Slow Rollers Social Rides is a chapter of the larger Slow Riders Vermont, a casual cycling group open to all riders of all ages and abilities. The Middlebury chapter launched earlier this year on June 4, and is led by Little Seed co-owner Anthony Gerakos and Lauren Ogden.

Along the way, participants turn the rides into mini-adventures. They've stopped for creemees, listened to live blues music at Ralph Myhre Golf Course and visited St. Mary's Cemetery to see the Egyptian mummy Amun-Her-Khepesh-Et, originally brought to Middlebury in 1886 by Henry Sheldon. After one of their longest rides, roughly 15 miles, the group cooled off with a swim at the Middlebury Gorge.

"We try to discover places around Middlebury that are like little shortcuts or roads that have been closed down, that we can still ride on," Ogden said.

COURTESY PHOTO / SLOW ROLLERS VERMONT

The Slow Rollers Middlebury chapter was founded this past summer, organizing social bike rides for anyone.

The idea to start a Middlebury chapter originated after Analog Cycles co-owner and Poultney Slow Rollers founder James Johnson reached out to both Gerakos and Ogden, inquiring if they would be interested in starting a club in Middlebury.

Ogden was excited about the idea and said she wanted a biking space that offered connection as much as exercise.

"Something I felt was missing in my life was doing social bike rides," Ogden said in an interview with The Campus. "[The bike shop] in town has rides, but they are fast-paced and they're mostly on pavement, so it's been fun to do slower, social rides."

Gerakos said that the group is structured to support all cycling ability levels.

"The whole concept is that it's a no drop ride, to take things fairly slowly," Gerakos said. "We walk up steep hills and if anyone is having issues we wait up."

Routes vary weekly and rely largely on back roads and trails to avoid busy highways like Route 7 and Route 30. Riders rotate leading the route, and the group encourages anyone interested to volunteer to lead future rides.

Community partnerships have also grown alongside the group's popularity. Morgan Horse Farm in Weybridge, Vt. mowed their property so that the group would have a safe path to bike. Lincoln Peak Vineyard in New Haven, Vt. extended their hours for the Slow Rollers to have a drink or two after one of their rides.

The group promote their rides through Instagram (@slowrollersmiddlebury), Front Porch Forum and flyers. Attendance has grown steadily since the summer, with cyclists ranging from toddlers to riders in their 70s — many joining from Rutland, Bristol and even out-of-state visitors.

The group has three rides left this year and expect to resume in April, when they hope to get more students and community members involved then.

"I think with year two, we will see a lot more fanfare around it…That's the goal, to make it a little bit bigger than us," Gerakos said.

Editor's Note: Managing Editor Mandy Berghela '26 contributed reporting to this article.

DON'T STUDY ABROAD

Op-Ed

Joey Disorbo *is a member of the class of 2025.5.*

COURTESY VISUAL

Four years is a pitifully short time for something so blatantly, absurdly wonderful: being an undergraduate on this campus. It would be remiss of every Middlebury student to take for granted the fact that everyone they know is within a 15-minute walk. It would be remiss to forget that the gym, the ice rink, the tennis courts, the pianos, the computer labs, and all the camping equipment you could ever need are all universally accessible — and free. It would be remiss to forget that, if you are on the dining plan, you could eat eight completely different meals a day without ever driving to the grocery store or spilling a single bubble of dish soap.

And, for all this, we are obliged only to readings, problem sets and attendance in class, the latter of these often contingent on whenever we decide to call in "sick". These academic items are highly curated, often world-class: dozens of brilliant people have dedicated their whole lives to ensuring that these things are as good and useful to us as possible.

We have the responsibilities of children and the privileges of kings. Most of us will not savor that we are the royalty of Candyland until we taste the bitter pill of the nine-to-five. You could almost argue that the high quality of life at Middlebury is so out of proportion to the real world that it is an act of cruelty to let anyone experience it.

It takes a considerable feat of imagination (and maybe a little ingratitude) not to love Middlebury for these reasons alone. If you really take a moment to consider these aspects of our lived experience — many of which are so quickly and deeply invisible to us — it seems criminal that students could be encouraged to study abroad. How anyone could spend a semester or even a year away from this of their own volition is truly beyond me.

Of course, many do. But only some for good reason. The only argument I can get behind is language acquisition: the only way to learn a language is to live it. If your intention in college is to acquire this mastery, I agree that you basically must go abroad in a full-immersion program — and commit to it.

It is true that some English-speaking abroad programs are quite academically demanding. But some are not. Some are so undemanding that the opportunity cost of missing just four normal Middlebury credits is eye-wateringly disproportionate. At Midd we are offered access to world-class academia; if you're going abroad for the academics, you might be leaving Eden in search of greener pastures. And if you're not... why are you going at all?

The truth of the matter is that going abroad is supposed to be an extreme. Abroad, on paper, functions for a small minority of students with outsized academic needs. But it has become "la mode" for Junior classes to fracture into six-month vacations, right at the intended peak of their social and academic lives. Going abroad might overwhelmingly be the wrong choice for most students, yet it has practically become the dogma of our collegiate times.

Let's not beat around the bush here. What are some of us really doing when we're abroad? Are we really learning Dutch? Perhaps we'd all prefer to think so, because I don't know what else could justify some of these bon-vivant vacations. All of us can think of one friend who came back from Europe with nothing to show for it beyond an admirably extensive survey of the local pub scene.

I can't speculate as to how this happened, but I must question our tolerance to its detrimental effects. Why do we simply accept as a fact of college that Junior year is a social dead-zone? Why do we so easily overlook the jarring discontinuity — discontinuity in classes, clubs, sports, relationships, virtually all facets of the Middlebury experience — that is directly, needlessly inflicted by the abroad cycle? We love to lament about the loss of community, yet we are all too eager to ignore the study abroad frenzy as a probable cause.

These issues are entirely preventable by a simple paradigm shift: Most students should not randomly adjourn their preciously short college experience to go sit in an apartment in some foreign city.

Is it really so controversial to suggest that most students would be better off staying in Middlebury, furthering the communities they have spent the last two and a half years working a foothold in? Instead they find themselves carted onto airplanes, returning home six months later — often dissatisfied, and usually having discovered the same appreciations that I have freely outlined for you in the beginning of this article. This appears to be such a fool's errand that you might begin to speculate who, if not students, is really benefitting from abroad programs...

Don't confuse my point: there's nothing wrong with drinking in European bars. Admittedly, it could even be a life's calling for most of us. But we have approximately 60 years to answer life's calling after we graduate, and we only have four years here, four years to learn, mingle and play. Weigh the numbers however you want.

If you agree with me that our basic luxuries here are, in many respects, "all one might ever need", you will agree that our time here is extremely valuable and worth appreciating, especially because it is so blindingly short. This, to me, is the overwhelming case against studying abroad. Not because the world isn't interesting, but because the world is not going anywhere. But Middlebury will, and once it's gone, it's gone for good.

STUDENT DEATH REMAINS THE ROUTINE AT MIDDLEBURY

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Two years ago, we wrote about how the losses of student life became a "routine" at Middlebury, when tragedies like losing members of our community and fellow students should be anything but routine. At that time, we urged the college to develop more comprehensive mental health support resources. The death of Lia Smith '26, another classmate, peer and friend, marks the fourth time in six years that a student has died on our campus. The college's response after each of these deaths has not worked the way it should have, and student death is now embedded in our school's culture. That needs to change.

After the deaths of Ivan Valerio '26 and Evelyn Mae Sorensen '25 in 2023, Middlebury made an effort to allocate funding towards mental health resources, hiring more full time, graduate interns and guest and visiting counselors. However, the death of another student who belonged to a marginalized community screams that something is still missing. We call for an urgent and new approach to supporting LGBTQ+ students at the school. In a rural institution like ours, it is far too easy for students to feel lost and unseen. It is not enough to claim we are a residential campus that innately breeds community and point to the mere existence of on-campus centers such as the Prism Center as complete solutions.

The theme of college President Ian Baucom's inauguration this weekend is "What is Middlebury for?" As the routine of student death at Middlebury continues, students cope with feelings of loss and more general feelings of sadness and our college hosts speakers that make transgender students feel unseen and invalidated, we are instead asking, "Who is Middlebury for?"

The "business as usual" approach after the previous student deaths continues to fail us. We do not want to move forward as if nothing has happened. Instead, we want to recognize each time a student dies, Middlebury changes forever, and the response to this change should be so impactful it actively prevents this from happening again — we as students and the administration need to make it absolutely clear that this is not the norm. A list of resources and events tacked onto the end of an email or on Presence is a Band-Aid, albeit necessary, part of a solution that does not reflect the profound change our community experiences every time we lose a peer to a mental health battle.

The administration might consider what would happen if they did decide to cancel classes for a day when a student dies. If athletes could not continue with their sports as usual, if our professors had to change their curriculum, and if not only those most affected by the death, but everyone, had to share a day of solidarity, we could use it as an opportunity to move forward together.

We know many students feel this impact on a deeper level, especially those who belonged to the same communities as Smith or who called her a friend. Our community means that as easy or difficult as it may be to continue on doing the things that bring you joy or thinking about a subject such as student death that is deeply painful, you must still laugh and grieve at the same time, and accept those contradictions as part of the process that will bring us all closer together.

Events that occurred this past week like the Dolci dinner, the Weybridge Community dinner and SASA's Diwali gathering are increasingly necessary spaces for students to laugh, be joyful and grieve together. We do not want those most affected by this loss to feel isolated. We want to all be a part of this community in order to heal. Events that are student-led are time and time again those with the highest impact, and we call for more opportunities to take charge in shaping our own support systems.

President Baucom wrote in his letter to the community that Smith "was–and will always remain–a member of our Middlebury family." We do not want the memory of Smith or any other student who has died to graduate with the class they belonged to. Smith's memory can best be served if we make sure to honor her and those like her, firstly by making sure no other students die in similar circumstances. Moving forward from Smith's death does not mean forgetting her or her death; it means that we grow closer as a community by speaking to each other honestly, growing more vigilant to protect one another and deepen our ties to each other in the wake of another loss.

The new approach we speak of may consist of a patchwork of solutions, like bringing back a student-run crisis hotline, or reinstating projects such as the Commons System that empower students to take charge in fostering community. We must look beyond the fractures of social cliques, teams, clubs, academic departments and organizations. Instead, we need to remember we are all living on a rural, isolated campus together, and we are inherently connected. We should start acting like it.

We hope that the upcoming inauguration this weekend will not only be a celebration, but an opportunity to tangibly recognize how we have failed and to start doing better. President Baucom is being inaugurated into the darkest reality of a Middlebury that is fractured along many lines by student death. It is time for a new routine, a new reality.

We want to thank the Middlebury students and community members who organized a search and rescue operation last week. It is a profoundly noble thing to sacrifice your time that may have been used to grieve, to look for your friend or your peer. We also want to thank Middlebury's leaders and the law enforcement that have tried to protect our community.

Middlebury will move forward, but we will not do so without continuously honoring the memory of Smith, and ensuring that we work to change our institution until we can write student death is not the routine at Middlebury.

How I processed grief at Middlebury

Op-Ed

***Ben Conway** is a member of the class of 2026.*

In late October of 2022, during my first year at Middlebury, I drove over the Green Mountains and into New Hampshire to see one of my best friends from high school for the last time. Though his eyes shone with their same flinty strength, cancer had weakened his body. After catching up for an hour in a surprisingly normal and lighthearted conversation, he had to go back to his room to sleep. I told him we all loved him and cared about him very much, and his last words to me were "I know."

In the following month, I rode my bike up Chipman Hill, went to parties with my friends, studied the Keynesian model of aggregate demand, drank horchata in Battell's bright yellow common room, swam some laps and helped plan a Friendsgiving meal. However, I also cried myself hoarse in a counselor's office, paced up and down a putrid stairwell trying to collect my thoughts in a voice memo and wandered around this halcyon campus at 5 a.m. in a state of delirium.

The experienced phenomenon of grief always involves endless permutations of the mundane and the existential. For me, a typical day involved thoughts about unimaginable suffering, my dead car battery and the use cases of the Spanish subjunctive. This strange combination of feelings was heightened by the loneliness of a campus that didn't fully understand me. It was a time where I could talk about how I was feeling, but I could never transmit what it was like to have the experience of grief itself.

Despite the peculiarity and intensity of the process, I did feel supported at Middlebury. My friends and professors gave me latitude to do what I needed to feel whole again, whether that meant continuing with my normal life or taking time to reflect. But the onus was on me, as an individual, to figure out what I needed. We live, after all, in a place where communitarian cultural and religious values are subservient to individual autonomy and secularism. I love studying here at Middlebury, which is a place that has challenged me academically and educated me from different cultural, religious and philosophical perspectives. Though I wouldn't change the college's pluralism, packed schedules and academic challenges for anything, I also think that they can lead to feelings of alienation in times of loss, like we're going through in our community right now.

COURTESY PHOTO/ BEN CONWAY

Looking over Middlebury from Chipman Hill on Oct. 20, 2022

Loss and its resultant alienation are some of the most difficult problems we face, and I don't pretend to have easy answers. Sometimes loss will feel like a dull pain, other times it will feel like an open wound. Sometimes it will make the world around you feel more meaningful, other times it will make even a beautiful scene feel hopeless and bleak. Because I'm not part of a religion that has defined customs for the grieving process, I found solace in trying a bunch of stuff. I went to meditation, called my family members, made food with my friends and looked at the trees on unfamiliar paths. I looked at old photos, played old songs and wrote about my feelings. Though I skipped a few classes, I made an effort academically and tried to get to know my professors more closely.

Above all else, my advice is to spend time in the company of other people. I don't know what exactly helps us during loss, but I am sure that we're not meant to be alone in the process. It can feel lonely on this campus, where grief always coexists with the sea of the nongrieving, with all their parties, all-nighters and everyday gossip. Know that one day, the throes of grief will lessen, perhaps with a perverse aftertaste of longing to grieve again, because it at least offers an emotional connection to the dead. Remember to not feel guilty about the ways in which you grieve or how you feel afterward. It's an inherently indescribable and senseless process exacerbated by a community that doesn't provide much of a script. Though it can be lonely, I hope this op-ed makes you feel a little less alone.

MORE THAN JUST A GROCERY STORE: WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS TO ENGAGE IN A FOOD COOPERATIVE

Op-Ed

Sam Surks *is a member of the class of 2025.5.*

There are many rites of passage that come along with becoming a Middlebury student: an overstimulating orientation week, your first year roommate, the first winter day in single digit temperatures when you realize what you're really in for. However, another less obvious rite of passage that I think of is your first walk into town on a beautiful Saturday and stumbling into the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op (MNFC) for the first time.

The Co-op is a magical place. You're first greeted by fresh and local produce, then quickly mystified by the paper bag-Sharpie situation at the bulk foods section. Ultimately, you are left in awe of the expertly sourced natural food products with cute packaging and a promise of health. Yes, you could buy Ritz crackers at Shaw's across the street for a lower price, but there is a certain whimsy in saving a few special items, like treating yourself to local berries and cheese, for your weekly grocery shop for the Co-op.

This was my experience at the Co-op for the first three and a half years I spent as a student at Middlebury College. During my junior year, I bought a membership mostly out of curiosity but not really knowing what that meant. That all changed last spring when I had the opportunity to be the first Middlebury student appointed to the Co-op Board of Directors. A year-long position opened up and they were hoping to widen the Board's representation of the community, which meant bringing in a student for the first time. My name was brought up from my previous classes in the food studies department and my time interning at The Knoll, and I suddenly found myself sitting at the monthly board meetings learning more about the Co-op than I ever anticipated.

COURTESY PHOTO / JULIA REED

Middlebury Co-op board photo taken at this fall's retreat.

Last week I attended my sixth monthly board meeting and coincidentally was approached about writing a Campus article about my experience. Truthfully, it has taken me six months of two-hour board meetings to begin to understand my role on the Board, the basics of policy governance and the significance of participating in a democratic, member-owned cooperative especially in our political context. I hope that this op-ed can act like the defrost button in your car, clearing the fog off of your understanding of the Co-op.

A good place to start would be: Why natural foods? The Co-op's history began 50 years ago as a pre-order buying club that sourced local, wholesome foods that were not available elsewhere around Middlebury. Members of the buying club had to buy food in bulk and package it themselves. Since then, the Co-op has undergone a few expansions and scrapped the buying club model but still holds the original values of ecologically sound practices of producing, sourcing and consuming food.

Another mystifying area worth clearing up is: Why buy a membership? What does it actually mean to be a member of the Co-op? I think of buying a $20 Co-op membership as owning a grocery store with your friends. The Co-op may seem on the surface like a small Whole Foods, but its magic is that it is cooperatively owned (Surprise! It's all in the name!). That means that when you buy a Co-op membership, you become a member-owner. You get to shape the priorities and the direction of the store and you get benefits as it succeeds. The important thing to understand here is that your money and business do not go towards a far-off, probably slightly evil, billionaire CEO. It goes right back into the Co-op, providing benefits for your local community and ultimately coming back to you in the form of patronage dividends checks once a year. That is certainly not the case for commercial grocers like Shaw's and Hannaford.

A question I've been getting often as my peers notice my face plastered on the 'Co-op Board of directors sign' at the store's entrance: What do you even do on the Co-op Board? An essential piece of a democratic, member owned business is that there are no top level executives making decisions about what the Co-op should sell, programs it should invest in for the community or the ethos that determines the growth of the business. These decisions are made by the member-owners through the Board of Directors and the general manager. Essentially, the member-owners elect the members of the Board. The Board works to develop, monitor and revise policies and limitations based on the vision of the member-owners for the general manager, who manages the staff in the store and is the direct link to 'on the ground' actions.

The ins and outs of policy governance and fiduciary responsibilities are seemingly endless — a pool much deeper than I can wade into during my one year appointment to the Board. However, the importance of a business like the Co-op is also endless. During a time when nothing in the world feels like it's trending in a hopeful direction, being part of a cooperative grocery store is an incredible and subversive way to engage as a consumer in an inherently capitalistic societal framework. Beyond the aisles themselves, the magic of the Co-op is that when the business succeeds, no one person wins because everybody wins. Every dollar is an investment into the store, the community, local foods or back into your own pocket.

TURN 'EM OFF, THEY'RE TOO BRIGHT, TURN 'EM OFF

Op-Ed

JT Meyer *is a member of the class of 2025.5.*

For nearly four years, after long sessions in any number of hidey-holes where I pretend to do work, I have traipsed home in the dark. This is hardly unique at Middlebury, upon Davis' closing at 12:00 a.m., students stream out of the building, returning to their dormitories like careworn monks. A late-night stroll home has been a standard at our college for over 200 years, a tradition that has been similarly observed at countless other institutions around the world.

Except, the Middlebury night-owls of today are now greeted with the sallow glow of lampposts placed at startlingly small intervals across campus: When night falls, whatever collegiate charm the school possesses during the day is overpowered by their unearthly hue. Middlebury is replete with satisfyingly designed stone edifices and masterful works of the Georgian and Colonial Revival styles, among others. Yet, one of these light fixtures is never more than three meters from any of these buildings, bathing them in a fluorescence normally reserved for operating rooms.

There will be those of you who will invariably think, "This guy seems a little off-kilter, prattling on about lampposts." Worry not, dear skeptics, I have a more practical point: Having a 10-foot lamppost whose bulbs emit the power of two suns directly outside your window is hardly a recipe for restful sleep. As a degenerate college student, I compromise my circadian cycles enough on my own time; the last thing I need is to make it to bed, pull my window shade down, and have my lizard brain tell me it's 2:00 p.m. because my room is filled with enough unnatural light to read the King James Bible in 10-point font.

Middlebury's classic wrought iron lampposts, which line much of our campus, aspire to an old-world charm, but their lightbulbs rid them of any character they might otherwise possess. This problem can be easily remedied, but the same cannot be said for the newer additions to the college's haphazard collection of lighting fixtures. The sympathetic critic might simply describe them as austere. I tend to prefer 'sheet metal rectangle atop concrete podium' as a more faithful description of these affronts to aesthetic sensibility.

For an example of how this seemingly minor concern has material impacts on our campus, take Middlebury's most recent major construction project, New Battell. Despite some minor quibbles I have with the garish cupola up top, it is an attractive, classically inspired variation on a Middlebury theme that sits reasonably well in its surroundings.

Evidently, however, the tens of millions that were drummed up for that project did not extend to the surrounding hardscape. The building is beset on all sides by a collection of lampposts that would make even that prophet of modernist design, Le Corbusier, shudder in his boots. Fixing more attractive, warmly lit lanterns around this façade would immeasurably improve the area at night and, in financial terms, would have represented a pittance of the project's sum total.

While things like these may seem small, they represent a larger carelessness in how and where we spend our money. The big, brash and obvious stuff, like New Battell, gets the same amount of attention as ever, but finer details are sacrificed in a morass of spreadsheets, depreciation schedules and amortization tables. The money spent on things like lampposts is often considered excessive in the moment, but this kind of thinking runs counter to the mission of a higher education institution. As the architects worked to make New Battell a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing part of campus for generations to come, the administration should consider how these details might make someone's bitterly cold walk back from a five-hour stint in Davis just a little bit better a century from now.

YUVRAJ SHAH / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

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OUR NEW OLD FRIENDS: PUBLIC ARTS COLLECTIONS ON CAMPUS

By YOUYOU ZHANG
Arts & Culture Editor

Since our first day in freshman year, we familiarized ourselves with the campus layout — navigating to classes, planning out the fastest routes and utilizing bikes and skateboards to help us hurry between buildings. As we trace our familiar routes to class each week, we might notice some hidden artworks around campus — statues in steel, bronze or aluminum, blending into the background, forming unique landscapes as the seasons change. These are our new old friends: the public art collection of Middlebury College.

The collection features around 30 artworks by nationally and internationally recognized artists. The artworks are installed, maintained and interpreted by the Committee on Art in Public Places (CAPP), composed of faculty, students, administrators and trustees. The Committee was established in the fall of 1994 after Middlebury's Board of Trustees adopted a "One Percent for Art" policy to allocate funds for the purchase, construction and renovation of artworks.

A week ago, on my way to the Davis Family Library, my attention was caught by the newly installed steel sculpture in front Warner Hall. The two rectangles moved slowly, cutting beams of sunlight in the process and fragmenting the blue sky in the backdrop into different geometric forms. There were moments I thought that the two were going to collide, but they simply slid past each other gracefully.

The "Two Open Rectangles" by George Rickey is a 12 × 3 × 3 feet stainless steel kinetic sculpture. It's an old friend of the college, originally installed in front of the Johnson Memorial Building.

Douglas Perkins, associate director for operations and finance at the Museum of Art recounted its checkered history.

"The sculpture was stolen in the summer of 1976, replaced in 1977 with an alarm installed at its base to deter theft and finally removed in 2022 during the renovation of the Johnson Memorial Building," Perkins wrote in an email to the Campus.

This piece does not depend on any mechanical devices to create movements; instead, it was designed–under the influence of Alexander Calder's mobiles–to move freely in response to the surrounding air currents. This allows it to perform unprogrammed random movements that reflect the day's condition. Some days it rests almost immobile, where we can barely detect its movement; other times it moves rapidly, waving its "arms" and taking up space around it. The invisible air guides its motion and breathes life into it. In return, the sculpture makes visible the subtle movements of air that usually go unnoticed.

Frederick C. Dirks Professor of International Economics William Pyle has his office situated on the third floor of Warner hall, his window facing the "Two Open Rectangles" and also admires the work.

"I could see it from my office every day, and I guess that's why I'm mutually obsessed with it," Pyle said. "It brightens my day. The rectangles are perfectly flat from my viewline because they align so precisely. When the wind picks up, the two rectangles collide through space in unpredictable ways, and I find it mesmerizing. Sometimes they form 'X's, sometimes 'V's, and there's always a moment when you can see through them like a frame. It's not just an artwork but also a frame for what's beyond — especially as the seasons change."

Each artwork in the collection embodies their own story. Some were directly purchased or commissioned, others were gifted to the college, and a few were added to complement specific construction projects. Tony Smith's "Smog" was acquired as part of the construction of Bicentennial Hall, celebrating the intersection of science and livelihood. Composed of carefully arranged octahedrons, it offers different visual effects from each viewing angle, with the most ideal viewpoint from above.

These works often add moments of surprise to my daily life. The first time I saw the "Frisbee Dog" on Battle Beach from a distance, I mistook it for a real figure. Upon closer inspection, I was amused by its energy and how it captures motion so vividly through a stationary form. Perkins noted that it's a good way to celebrate the invention of the frisbee — which, according to some Middlebury students, originated here in 1939.

Many of these artworks are old acquaintances of Middlebury College — most have been here longer than us. Unlike the exhibits in the museum, they integrate into our living and studying environment, fade into the backdrop of college buildings.

Sabarsky Graduate Fellow at the Museum of Art Eloise McFarlane '24.5 and her team created maps of the public artworks to raise awareness of the collection. These maps are available in the Johnson Gallery, the Davis Family Library and other campus locations. A new guide on public sculptures will also launch in December, accessible on the mobile phone app "Bloomberg Connects."

"When I was a student, I thought the public works weren't appreciated, so I have the opportunity now at the museum to try and give them a little bit more love and recognition," McFarlane said.

We are fortunate to have this collection of public artworks accompanying us, shaping our shared memories of Middlebury and adding moments of surprise to our daily lives. Next time you come across one of these new old friends, take a moment to pause and get to know it by name.

YOUYOU ZHANG & WILLIAM PYLE/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Some of the public art on campus, "Smog" and "Two Open Rectangles."

IT'S OKAY TO CRY: PROCESSING GRIEF THROUGH MUSIC

By LIAM FRENCH
Contributing Writer

It's the seasonal act: Leaves detach from trees with a last flaming breath, dry wind chills your throat and chest and the sun sets quickly towards the heavens, leaving us aching for more of its intangible warmth. There is an emptiness in fall, yet its warmth is immortalized in the digital world. We post pictures and videos of the season online, but they can't replenish the trees left barren. They only serve as a reminder of what once was. For some, the pains of seasonal change are eased through music. "So I," track nine from CharliXCX's critically acclaimed "BRAT", encapsulates this tension. CharliXCX, with the help of A.G. Cook, processed grief through music.

Situated between "Rewind" and "Girl, So Confusing," "So I" removes the listener from BRAT's effervescent rave for just a moment, inviting contemplation about one's physical and mental wellbeing. Despite not being the life of the party, this song is not a complete departure from the brat mold. It is still abrasive and in your face with its whining synthesizers, punchy bass and incessant autotune. It's an unabashed outpouring of grief expressed through an autotuned lime green shattered hole in the wall. Underscored by a synth sampled from the late producer SOPHIE's "It's Okay To Cry," this heartfelt ballad expresses Charli's love tinged with loss and her friendship with SOPHIE.

Producing experimental electronic music with Brittain's PC Music Group alongside A.G. Cook and Charli, SOPHIE's song "Its Okay to Cry" serves as a metaphor for self-acceptance. SOPHIE was stuck between two worlds in her trans identity: the outer, physical self and her inner, true self which she couldn't freely express. SOPHIE sings, "Just know whatever hurts, it's all mine /It's okay to cry (It's okay to cry)," connoting the pain that comes with hiding one's true self. This mantra for moving through and accepting life's difficulties, "It's okay to cry," is borrowed and sampled by Charli to help her cope with her close friend's death.

The pair first collaborated on Charli's 2016 EP Vroom Vroom, referenced in the first verse of "So I featuring a.g. cook" from the Album Brat: "and it's completely different but also still brat": "/ First met on the outskirts of Stockholm / All of your things in a black suitcase / First day, made Vroom Vroom in the basement". They've since collaborated on multiple songs in Charli's Discography such as "Out of my Head," "Roll With Me" and "No Angel." SOPHIE's confectionary production can be heard in the glitzy churning synths of "Lipgloss," track 10 on Charli's 2017 Album "Number 1 Angel". Matching the syrupy production, Charli sings " Yeah, you know I'm sugary sweet / Baby boy, gon' rot your teeth, like woah."

SOPHIE's glimmering production is emulated on "So I" through vocal manipulation that mimics grieving wails, and echoey vocal modulation in the chorus. The brightness that SOPHIE brought to music and to CharliXCX's life is imbued into the lyrics. CharliXCX sings "Every day, every night, your star burns so bright" and "You had a power like a lightnin' strike." Aside from SOPHIE's cultural starpower, the star that Charli references is the asteroid 1980 RE1 which was renamed "Sophiexenon" in honor of her passing, through the efforts of a petition on change.org cosigned by Charli.

Everyone experiences grief in different ways. "Even the most insignificant things felt enormous," Charli shared in a message on Instagram. "I will honor Sophie in my own time personally, in my grief, through my memories, through my work, through writing things only I will read."

We carry the memory of the deceased with us: through our lived experiences, through our shared identities, through our compassion, through our culture and through our community. Embracing this overlapping "ven-diagram of self" allows one to keep moving forward through the grieving process. Allowing oneself to process grief with the support we need is essential to communal recovery.

She additionally expressed the level to which SOPHIE had impacted her: "She taught me so much about myself without even realizing. I wish I had told her more how special she was, not just her music, but her as a person. I love you and I will never forget you Sophie."

Death requires one to reflect on just how special every individual life is. For musicians, they are able to process these intangible ideas by rendering them into audible ones. Committing to a written or musically structured form helps one clarify and cope with how they feel, and connects them to an audience who can find empathy within their art.

In "So I" Charli sings, "Didn't know how I should act /I watched you dance online." Her lament raises ways that the digital age affects the grieving processes. Though she just died, her memory lives on in video and pictorial form, replaying forever in an immortal digital world.

When one loses someone they love, they search for fragments of that person everywhere, like putting together a broken puzzle that can never be completed. Listening to and creating music helps solve this puzzle; the musician finds solace through the conversion of catharsis to music, and the listener finds it through listening to music to experience this catharsis.

Like music, her sounds and words live on in an endless playlist of memories: her smile, her laugh, her dancing, her femininity, her voice, her personality, her passions and her fight for trans rights. We are left with her legacy. "So I" reminds us that grief is universal. In processing the memory of the deceased, one must remember "It's okay to cry / So I know I can cry, I can cry, so I cry."

COURTESY PHOTO/ CHARLI XCX

British singer songwriter Charli XCX and the late songwriter and DJ SOPHIE.

REIMAGINING CRIME, PUNISHMENT AND HEALING IN VERMONT "BEYOND BARS"

By ELIZABETH SCHIERMAN
Layout Editor

The Johnson Exhibition Gallery hosted a screening of the documentary film "Beyond Bars: Reimagining Justice and Healing in VT" on Oct. 24 in collaboration with its exhibit "Finding Hope Within."

The exhibit was co-curated by John Vincent of "A Revolutionary Press", Heather Newcomb of "Vermont Works for Women" and Ashley Messier of "Vermont Women's Justice and Freedom Initiative". "Finding Hope Within" features artworks of incarcerated women in Vermont, ranging from paintings to poems to crochets. It also featured "Art from Guantanamo"; work made by detainees at Guantanamo Bay who used various mediums to imagine a world far from containment.

Some of these artworks are featured in "Beyond Bars" as well, as the film also focuses on women in the Vermont prison system. The film explores social issues Vermont faces today such as homelessness, substance abuse and the carceral system. It questions our view of crime and who we define as a criminal. The film also explores how the justice system deals with crime, suggesting that we've been using the "band-aid" method of solving problems rather than addressing the root causes.

The filmmakers, four Vermonters, went around the state for a year, interviewing people at the forefront of these issues. They visited non-profit organizations, homelessness support groups and cooks and specialists, asking them to share their perspectives and experiences. The film revealed a growing number of people who struggle to support themselves financially in Vermont, with few government resources to help them with basic needs such as food and shelter.

Most of the women incarcerated at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility (CRCF), the state's only women's prison, located in South Burlington, VT, are either victims of abuse, mental health issues, drug addiction or homelessness. CRCF usually houses no more than 200 women at once.

As the filmmakers were gathering content, the Vermont's Department of Corrections proposed a plan to build a new correctional facility. The starting cost of this project is about $90 million. The film addresses this, questioning whether or not the government is allocating its funds appropriately. After all, the film sheds light on the lack of government support. Without government aid, homelessness, mental health issues and drug addictions become root causes of many acts of crime, and the carceral system is not empathetic towards these root causes. Through this, the film raises important questions: Will a new building solve the larger problems Vermont faces? Or is it just another band-aid?

ELLIE TRINKLE/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Work made by incarcerated artists that is featured in the "Finding Hope Within" exhibit.

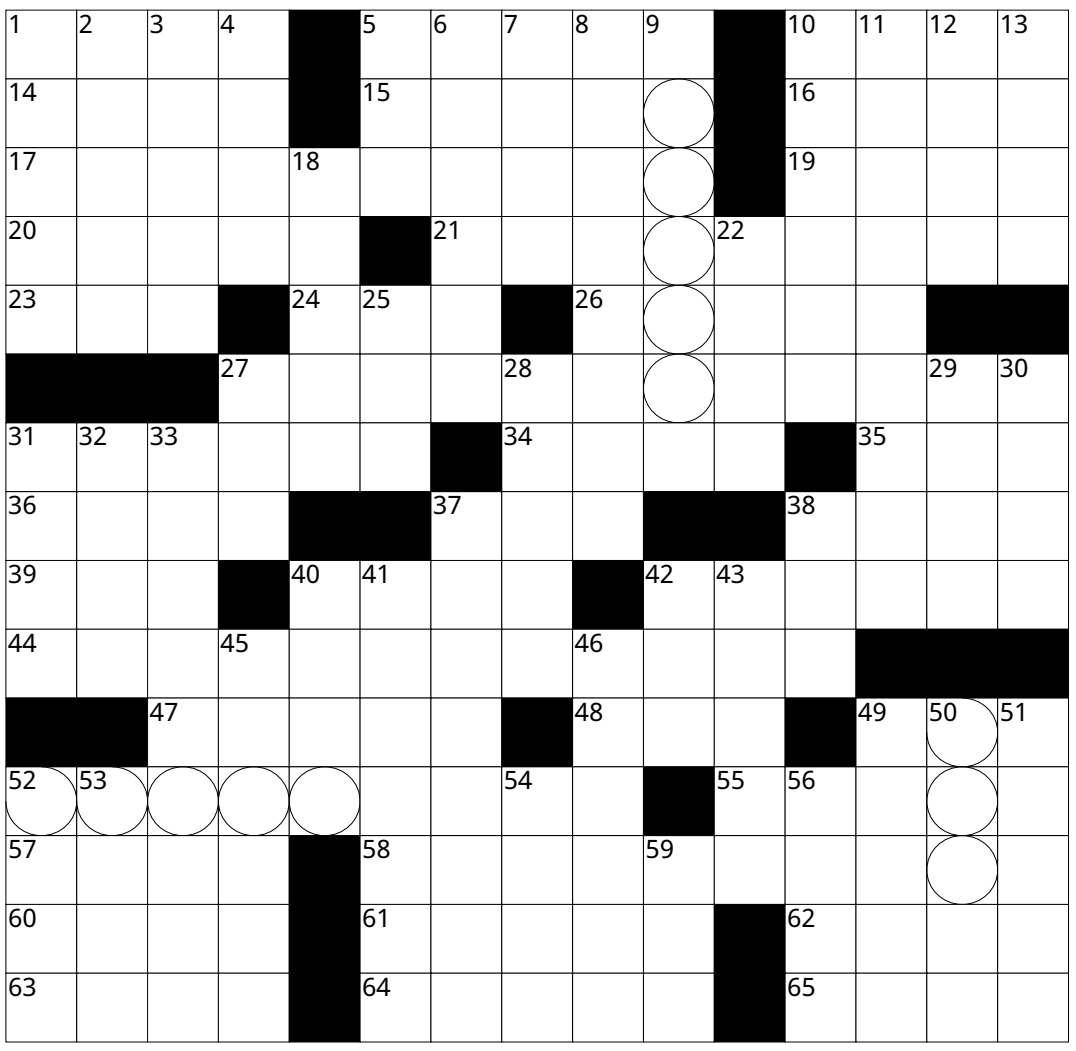
The final section of the film is a synthesis of four interviews with women currently living at the CRCF. They share the experiences that have led them to be incarcerated and their plans for the future, expressing fear and anxiety about going back into a world lacking support systems. But their words also radiate hope and readiness to become a part of society once again.

One of the women talks about her plans of owning a food truck after her release. She plans to employ younger kids in order to teach them work ethic at an early age. She imagines the truck to be purple with a big sign saying "katastrophe," along with music and outdoor seating.

As the film comes to an end on this hopeful note, it reserves space for questioning systemic inefficacies. How must we as individuals and as a society change the way we think about people who struggle? How can we navigate and negotiate accountability, punishment, treatment and healing? The answers to these questions are yet to be found.

Trick or Treat

Winter Heaton



ACROSS
1 Nanny ___ (surveillance devices)
5 Walrus features
10 Sound of shock
14 Studio class with foam board and rulers: Abbr.
15 Rodeo bucker
16 "Free Willy" creature
17 Waving to the land of pasta? (Mary Ann Esposito cookbook)
19 Yemen neighbor
20 Wyoming range, including Mount Owen and Teewinot
21 Parisian landmark on Île de la Cité
23 Orbiting research facility: Abbr.
24 "Crazy Rich Asians" director Jon M. ___
26 Peter Griffin in "Family Guy," for one
27 Halloween costume with a lab coat and crazy hair
31 Black-eyed ___ (flowers)
34 Vase handle
35 Setting for simmering
36 FedEx rival
37 Large
38 In addition
39 Flavored water brand
40 "The Incredibles" family name
42 Happy shouts
44 Halloween decoration made by following the steps in the circled letters
47 Some nobles or grey teas
48 Game with Reverse cards
49 Tiger Woods' org.
52 Race car McQueen
55 "No way!"
57 Deep blue
58 Stretchiness
60 Expert
61 Indian instrument
62 Manuscript encl.
63 Kans. neighbor
64 Like pretzels
65 Writers Nellie and Robert

DOWN
1 Desert flora
2 Zodiac ram
3 Future docs' exams
4 "Go away, fly!"
5 Insta hashtag for nostalgic content
6 Planet beyond Saturn
7 Climb without ropes
8 Making 9-Down, perhaps
9 Winter warmers
10 Skilled in
11 Texas critter that can roll into a ball
12 "Click here to win $1,000!" message, likely
13 Window part
18 Quechua speaker
22 ___ Mode of 40-Across movie
25 Some TVs
27 Un poquito ___ (a bit more)
28 Stone pile to mark a trail
29 Mediocre
30 Uncommon bills
31 Topic: Abbr.
32 "We know what it means to serve" org.
33 Baby or sporty, for example
37 Capital city in South America
38 "Kung Fu" actor Philip
40 Harbor for ships
41 Totality
42 Small cyst
43 Rice-___
45 White Russian liqueur
46 Pulls on, as heartstrings
49 Perfume container
50 Brave
51 "Now I remember!"
52 Dunmore, por ejemplo
53 Greenland native
54 Abbr. in many org. names
56 Seaside West Coast school for marine biologists and surfers
59 Attempt

FOOTBALL DEFEATS BATES ON HOMECOMING WEEKEND

By THIE HARTHONO
Contributing Writer

Amid an overcast homecoming weekend, the Middlebury football team took on the Bates Bobcats at Alumni Stadium. The Panthers cruised past the Bobcats, tallying their 50th win in the matchup first contested in 1948 and improving their all-time record to 50-15-3.

Middlebury came into the game off three straight losses, including last week's heroic come-from-behind effort which saw the Panthers fall just two points short of defeating the NESCAC-leading Trinity College Bantams.

Those losses "definitely put a chip on our shoulder, because that isn't something this program is used to," Shane Johnson '26 said. "The players and coaching staff have shown a lot of resiliency these past few weeks."

Trailing 7-0 at the end of the first quarter, the Middlebury offense scored 24 to Bates' three over the next half hour of play, comfortably securing a 34-16 victory over the Bobcats.

The Bobcats received the ball to start the game, and 12 plays later, a three yard handoff into the endzone completed the visitors' 78-yard drive. Neither offense scored for the remainder of the quarter.

The Panther offense ignited, evening the score just two and a half minutes into the second. On third down and eight from the Panthers' own 30-yard line, Brian Moran '26 slung a 29-yard pass to Mike Ahonen '26 for an over-the-shoulder grab down the left sideline. A six yard touchdown rush by Caleb Smith '27 down the left side topped off the 96-yard drive.

"Mike Ahonen, one of our captains, made a lot of great catches. Those grabs don't just get us yards, but build morale and momentum. Brian Moran is also a great leader, and he put our receivers in good positions with great balls," Santino Gambardella '27 said.

Three-and-out on the following possession for the Bobcats, and the Middlebury offense maintained their momentum. Marching down the field, a handoff to Connor McClellan '28 from the one yard line gave the Panthers a 14-7 lead with 5:03 left in the half.

Bates took the following kickoff and quickly marched down the field. A 65 yard play through the air brought the Bobcats to the Middlebury 10-yard line. The Bobcats failed to find the endzone, settling for three and trimming the Panther lead to 14-10 at the half.

The Panthers received the ball to start the second half, immediately storming 75 yards down the field. McClellan topped off the drive with a nine-yard run up the middle, bringing the Panther lead to 21-10.

An interception by Gabe Harris '27 prematurely ended the Bobcats' drive. The Panthers took advantage, stretching their advantage to 24-10 with a field goal by kicker Tony Wang '26.

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO
Connor McClellan '28 driving up the field for Middlebury.

The Bobcats finally scored again with 2:08 remaining in the third, completing a short touchdown pass but failing to convert the extra point.

The score of 24-16 remained unchanged for most of the fourth, until the Panthers batted down a Bobcat punt, gaining possession at the Bates 12-yard line. Wang kicked another field goal to extend the Panther lead to 27-16 with 6:14 remaining.

The Bobcat offense trotted onto the field, just to get picked off on their very first play. Charlie Grant '27 came up with the interception at the Bobcat 47. McClellan broke into the endzone from six yards out for his third touchdown of the day, cementing the Panthers' 34-16 victory.

The Middlebury defense was anchored by Shane Johnson '26 and Charlie Ozolin '27, who each totaled seven tackles. Calvin Szoradi '28 and Tommy Schwartz '28 had a sack apiece, and Grant, Woodward and Harris each had a takeaway.

"The defensive backs, that's the group I spend the most time with, and those guys were locked in all week – it showed with the turnovers and our ability to limit big plays," Johnson said.

"They're great leaders, and when the defense gets a big interception, it completely changes the momentum of the game," Gambardella said.

McClellan rushed for 121 yards, finishing the game with a career-high 31 carries and tied a career-high with three rushing touchdowns.

The Panthers will face Hamilton on the road this weekend.

"We are going to have the same approach as always, we'll bring focus, intensity, and attention to detail every day, no matter the opponent or circumstance," Johnson said.

THE SPOOKY ISSUE: FEAR IN SPORTS

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

When I was in middle school, my travel soccer coach told me to stop "playing scared." I kept playing scared, so I quit soccer and inevitably became a runner. Yet there is plenty to be scared of in cross country and track, and soon I learned that you generally can't outrun your fears in sports. In honor of Halloween, The Campus spoke with some of Middlebury's athletes to highlight these various sporting fears.

Fear can creep in before competition even begins, especially with an intensely focused audience looking on. Ting Cui '25.5, a national-level figure skater, feels their presence in the rink.

"Competing in front of a massive crowd of people because the anxiety spikes and all your muscles tense and nerves can take over real quick... [it's] the pressure of perfection in competition," Cui said.

Leaping from the ice to the track, a similar pressure exists for high jumpers: the need to immediately get things right in front of a scrutinizing crowd.

"My first jump of a competition because it sets the tone for a meet. I am always super relieved after my first clearance," Drew McStay '27 said.

The pole vaulting runway also draws attention at a track meet, and the unique combination of sprinting with a long pole, stamping it into the ground, and attempting to clear a bar a dozen feet in the air can be terrifying. As Robert Altavilla '27 admitted, shooting himself straight up — reaching an awkward standstill position while the pole is vertical beneath you — is his greatest fear. If a vaulter is less lucky, their pole can snap midair and possibly impale them, a story Altavilla shared about another vaulter.

As jumpers and vaulters attempt to soar, a less visible fear plays out on the starting line of a race.

"You're scared of being in pain but at the same time it's how you get faster," cross country runner Zach Utz '26 explained. It's a wonderful paradox. The fear of pain through intense exertion runs through all sports, yet in every discipline, the reward for enduring that pain can be truly intoxicating.

COURTESY PHOTO / GEORGE MADISON
Pole vaulter Henry Ericson '24.5 testing physics.

Beyond the track, fear still looms in the stands and around the grounds — a more practical fear of sorts, as a member of the cross country team confessed: "Scariest part of my pre-race routine is always the porta potty lines 10 minutes before the gun goes off."

However, track and skating lack one common fear-inducing factor: a ball. The presence of a ball can be scary in the dodgeball sense — simple avoidance and the evolutionary aversion to pain.

"[The press] is when the defense winds up to hit the ball, cause when you get hit with the ball it really hurts... on defensive penalty corners, running out as the fly to go get the ball because they're also hitting the ball at you," field hockey forward Madaket Rzepka '26 shared.

Walk inside from the Peter Kohn field hockey field to the Bostwick Family Squash Center and the same fear lurks.

"The scariest thing that has happened to me on a squash court is definitely getting hit with the ball. Ball going 100mph, no chance to move, and it stings," squash player Naum Lekovic '29 said.

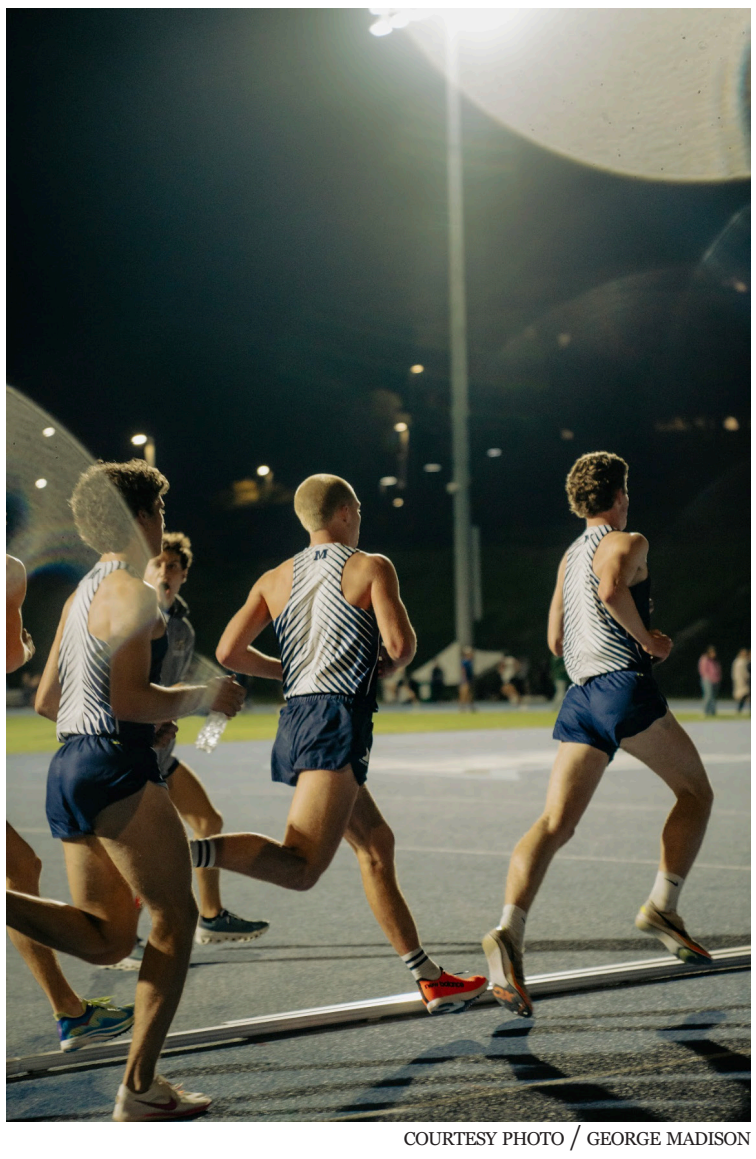
A ball can also be scary because of its unpredictability — a foreign object, sometimes deceptive, untrustworthy and beyond our control.

"When it's an open goal [and] the ball comes to you but it bobbles. You can't predict where the hell it's going but you know you should score," soccer midfielder Dylan Payne '28.5 said. "The scariest part is when you make contact with it and that split second when you don't know if you missed."

Fear also haunts athletes as their height in the air increases — not a fear of heights itself, but of a loss of control when off the ground. Such instances are common in basketball, and the outcomes of a bad landing can be grisly.

"Going up in the air for any reason, you're really defenseless and one hit can take you out for a while," basketball forward Meghan McDonald '28 wrote.

Figure skaters face a similar risk, akin to the "twisties" in gymnastics. "Losing your sense of awareness in the air because you can't anticipate the landing or brace for a bad one," Cui explained. "It just feels like you're flying blind and a lot can go wrong on the landing... it's a high risk of injury."



COURTESY PHOTO / GEORGE MADISON
Middlebury distance trio races the 5k in San Marcos, California.

This fear reaches new heights when jumping with a horse. "There is always a risk of falls, especially rotational falls when jumping and especially in eventing which can be fatal," equestrian team member Tess Hegarty '25.5 said.

Fatal risks in sports are another origin of many athletes' fears. Will Kallman '27, an alpine skier for Middlebury, competes among especially deadly conditions. "The scariest thing about ski racing is the proximity to serious injury or death at all times. Nearly every moment while ski racing, you are one poorly timed or executed move from a blown-out knee, paralysis, or even death."

Facing the risk of one's ski bindings ejecting at 50mph is enough to make anyone fear for their life. Runners know that feeling, too.

"My actual greatest fear is dropping dead while running," distance runner Owen Johnson '26 said.

"[My fear is] heart failure during a workout," Utz added.

A final category of fear relates to one's role on a team — a fear of not stepping up when needed, of underperforming when your teammates count on you most.

"Just missing... not doing my job," football kicker Tony Wang '26 admitted.

"Letting the boys down," cross country captain Shef West '26 echoed.

Fear has many faces in sports and its causes are endless. A fiercely focused crowd is terrifying, while a loss of control midair can scare the best athletes. The expectations of teammates breed a fear of disappointment, and many dread the imminent pain of their competitions. No matter the sport or scare, though, all these Middlebury athletes certainly share one trait: the ability to overcome these fears and play brave.

Editor's Note: Sports Editors Kanan Clifford '28.5, Ting Cui '25.5 and Theodore Maniatis '28.5 contributed reporting to this article. Cui is a sports editor and the Business Manager on The Campus.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL LOOKS TO BUILD MOMENTUM

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Panther volleyball standout Molly Harrison '27.

By KANAN CLIFFORD & THEO MANIATIS
Sports Editors

Acclaimed fictional coach Ted Lasso once said the happiest animal in the world is a goldfish. Why? Because it has a 10-second memory. The Panthers need to have the memory of a goldfish and keep confidence high following their struggles at the New England Challenge.

Middlebury women's volleyball dropped three games over the weekend at the tournament, now mired in a seven-game skid as playoffs are rapidly approaching.

The Panthers have had a consistent rotation of seven players throughout the season, and climbed to a seven-game win streak over two weeks in late Sept. Led by setter Campbell Bartley '28 and her 36 assists, the Panthers dominated Bates 3–0 on Oct. 4 to improve their record to 11–4.

But in the last three weeks, their early season form has disappeared. Starting on Oct. 4 against 25th ranked Tufts, the Panthers have won a mere three sets in seven games.

Playing in the first game of the New England Challenge against Babson College, the Panthers showed some fight. After losing a hard-fought first set 27–25, Middlebury stormed back to build an 11–4 initial lead and win the set 25–14. They then lost the third set, but instead of rolling over, relied on accurate attacks from outside hitter Molly MacDonald '29 and middle blocker Gabby Pribisich '27 to take the fourth and force a tiebreaker fifth set. Unfortunately, Middlebury could not finish the job and lost the final set 15–10: their losing streak persisted.

Next up was 16th ranked MIT. Strong play from the Panthers saw them trail by a pair (17–15) midway through the first set, but the Engineers pulled away for a 25–17 win. More of the same followed in the second set. After an MIT service error led to five consecutive Middlebury points, MIT roared back to snag a 25–16 set win. The Engineers completed the sweep with a 25–18 win in the third set.

After stumbling to a string of losses in their first two games, the team entered their third against Springfield still searching for form. Halfway through the first set, it looked like they found it. A kill by Molly Harrison '27 led the Panthers on a surge that gave them a 16–10 lead. But Springfield's heads never drooped, rallying off a Middlebury serving error, to win 25–22. Springfield went on to win the second and third sets 25–13 and 25–21 respectively.

"The Panthers need to cut down on service errors and improve [their] returns" Head Coach Sarah Raunecker '92 said. "We'll have to work on some different hitting strategy to avoid getting blocked."

If you looked closely at the sidelines this year, you might have noticed a new face alongside Rauckner on the coaching staff: student-coach Spencer Ralph '28.5. A former high school volleyball player, Ralph has become a beloved presence on the team

"She is really good at giving inspirational speeches in the huddle," teammate Lillian Caldwell '26 said.

This season's rut is strangely reminiscent of last year. After starting the season strong, Middlebury got swept by the same three teams in the New England Challenge. Then, after sneaking into the playoffs, they lost the first two sets against Bowdoin in the first round.

"Then we ended up turning it around, winning the whole thing, and having the most successful season in program history," Harrison said. "It just shows that in those clutch moments, our team can pull it out."

Even amid the slump, the players are staying positive.

"These losses are really good learning experiences…to position us going into the postseason," Caldwell said.

Most of all, this team needs to remember who they are—champions. Playoff seeding is on the line this weekend as they face Williams and Amherst for Senior Day at home.

"We have sophomores, juniors and seniors who have been [to a NESCAC championship]," Raunecker said. "They can set the tone for us to get back."

WOMEN'S SOCCER EARNS 1–0 VICTORY OVER BATES

By DYLAN MEYER
Contributing Writer

Last Saturday, No. 10 -ranked Middlebury women's soccer celebrated its Senior Day against Bates, recognizing its graduating class: goalkeeper Livia Davidson '26, defender Roshan Purcell '26 and forward Carolina Espinosa '26. The festivities complemented a hard-fought 1–0 victory.

The Panthers dominated the first half, preventing Bates from generating a single shot and taking the lead with a floated finish from the top of the box by Mia Feldman '27, her third goal of the season. The performance was emblematic of a top 10 team in the country, confidently linking up play and defending with confidence.

The game opened up at the start of the second half, with both teams trading chances within the first 10 minutes. Following this brief lapse, Middlebury regained its dominant position and was unfortunate not to have extended its lead when a shot was headed off the goal line by a Bates player. Middlebury continued to apply pressure, with Taya McClellan '28 forcing Bates' goalkeeper to make two more last-ditch saves.

The impact of the Panthers' seniors was clear during the game and has been evident throughout the season. Espinosa cleverly linked up play throughout the game, often dropping into midfield from the front line to receive the ball before playing a well-placed pass. Purcell and Davidson have both been essential to Middlebury's excellent defensive record throughout the campaign, allowing only five goals in 14 games. On Saturday, the duo neutralized Bates' offense for most of the game. Head Coach Peter Kim said it was hard to encapsulate just how large an impact the seniors have had throughout the season, both as players and as leaders.

The win marks the Panthers' tenth of the campaign, putting them in position to contend for the top spots in the NESCAC standings. The team has a chance to topple the leaders on Oct. 28 as they travel to rival #14 Williams, who currently sit just two points ahead of Middlebury in the table. The matchup is always an exciting one.

"Standings don't really matter when you play Williams — all you want to do is win," Kim said.

The team will also be preparing for the first round of NESCAC tournament play this weekend.

MIDDLEBURY FIELD HOCKEY ASSERTS DOMINANCE OVER BATES

By HANNA FREUND
Staff Writer

Breaking their two game losing streak, an anomaly for the decorated Panthers, Middlebury field hockey defeated Bates 2-1 on their home turf this Sunday.

After four losses this season and falling in the national and NESCAC rankings, the squad pulled out a hard-fought win against the Bobcats, reasserting their dominance in the sport.

Starting forward Addie Chandler '29 tallied her seventh goal of the season to put the Panthers ahead 1-0 in the first quarter. Not long after, Emma McCann '28 lifted the ball over the Bates goalkeeper, bringing the score to 2-0.

Bates answered in the second quarter but the Panthers held them off for the remainder of the game to secure the 2-1 victory in their final home game of the regular season.

In this week's NCAA Division III NPI rankings, Middlebury field hockey sits at number nine, down from number one at the beginning of the season. Bates is ranked sixth.

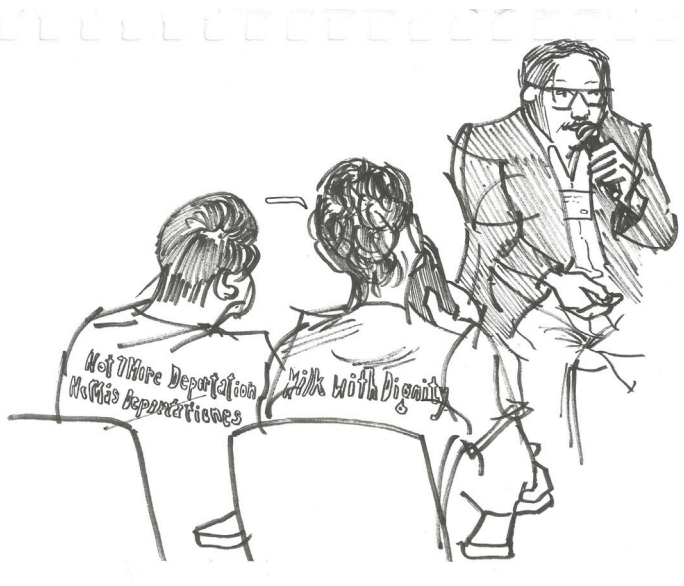
In the NESCAC, Middlebury is in a four-way tie for the second position in the rankings. Tufts field hockey has secured hosting rights for the final four of the NESCAC tournament as the league's current number one seed. However, the Panthers will look to finish within the top four in order to host quarterfinals this coming Saturday.

With only one regular season game left this season, the Panthers have their sights set on the postseason, where they have historically dominated. Although they lost in last year's NESCAC semi-final, they won their seventh consecutive National Championship against Johns Hopkins. The squad will look to add to their long list of accolades as their season continues into November.

Field hockey is set to play away at Williams on Tuesday, the final game of the regular season. In order to host the quarterfinal game of the NESCAC tournament, a win is required.

BRIDGING ACADEMIA AND ACTION AT THE MIDDLEBURY MIGRATION CONFERENCE

By JUNE SU & AMELIA WINSLOW COLDER
Senior Multimedia Editor & Contributing Writer



JUNE SU / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

On Friday, Oct. 24, the Axinn Center for the Humanities hosted the Middlebury Migration Conference in McCardell Bicentennial Hall as part of its "Migrant Justice in Vermont and Beyond" initiative. The event brought together a range of artists, advocates and academics to discuss their experiences and work around migration and migration justice. In a moment where ordinary migrant workers like Guadalupe and Emanual Diaz are kidnapped from South Burlington and transferred to detention centers across the country, the conference created a space for urgently needed mobilization and solidarity.

Throughout three panels interspersed with community networking time, participants and panelists interrogated the historical, current and future conceptions of migration. How do different narratives skew our social, political, and temporal perceptions of the process of migration, in Vermont and beyond? How can humanities research and its academic resources be more connected with on-the-ground action?

Migrant Justice leader and conference panelist Enrique "Kike" Balcazar underscored this necessary connection, emphasizing the importance of students in the movement for migrant justice.

"Students at Middlebury College, and in general, can contribute a lot to the fight for migrant justice. I hope that students leave the panels feeling inspired. Students have been very important to us for decades… having helped when there are protests and marches, transporting, translating, creating art, and more," Balcazar told The Campus.

Catey Boyle, the two-year postdoctoral fellow of the "Migration Justice in Vermont and Beyond" grant, was inspired to design and create this conference after attending the Vermont Palestine Conference (VPC) in October 2024.

"The goal of the grant is also to be working on developing long-term, sustainable connections with community partners so that Middlebury is not just a college on a hill, but rather a college that's within Vermont life, and particularly around Vermont migrant justice life," Boyle said.

Marita Canedo and Wafic Faour, two speakers Boyle saw at the VPC, became active members of the Middlebury Migration Conference. Marita Canedo is the Program Coordinator for the Migrant Justice Community Support Line and the Milk with Dignity Program, which organizes farmworkers, farmers, corporate buyers and consumers to secure dignified working conditions in dairy supply chains. On the third panel, Wafic Faour, member of Vermonters for Justice in Palestine and the Vermont Coalition for Palestinian Liberation, delivered calls to action to the Middlebury community.

Migrant Justice is an organization that models a symbiotic relationship between academia and community action. Since 2009, the organization has organized for economic justice and human rights for immigrant farm workers in Vermont. Organizer Enrique "Kike" Balcazar, previously targeted and detained by ICE for his leadership in activism, explained to The Campus that the organization is a part of a community advancing dignity and justice. In this network, Migrant Justice works with religious congregations, the Vermont Pride Center, the Vermont Worker Center, and student organizations like Juntos at Middlebury and University of Vermont (UVM).

The conference featured three panels: "Where I Come From," "Passages," and "Aftermaths." Organized around a loosely "chronological" order, the different sections address the conditions that compel people to leave their 'homes, interrogate the difficulty and violence that characterizes physical migration, and ask what life is like as an immigrant living in Vermont. Together, three panels coalesce into a final question: what forms of solidarity and artistic creation have emerged in this final "chapter"?

Boyle explained to The Campus that the chronological structure of the conference is more than meets the eye. Even though inter-organizational solidarity in Vermont appears to be a concluding chapter to a linear progression of migration, the conference structure challenges this two-dimensional conception.

"The structure of the panels seems to be telling a story that's going from point A to C. We were in a lot of conversations around this [during planning] because often 'migration' is not necessarily a story with a beginning, middle, and end. People are often displaced multiple times. People may not want to stay in Vermont long term," Boyle said.

"Before every border is a world, a history, and a smell. Immigration starts with the memories and the things that are left behind," panelist Elizabeth Camarillo Gutierrez said in her speech.

Gutierrez is the author of the New York Times Editor's Pick, My Side of the River. While her Mexican immigrant parents were forced to return to Mexico when she was 15, Gutierrez remained in the border town of Tucson, Arizona. She went on to become high school valedictorian, gain acceptance to the University of Pennsylvania, and live the life of a "super-immigrant," a title that she rejects. She told the crowd that she was actually the "return on investment" for the true super-immigrants: Her undocumented parents who worked as custodians at a movie theater with an "unshakeable faith" in their American-born children. At the conference, she spoke in-depth about her experience growing up as a second generation American.

"Every story by my parents began with 'cuando viviamos allá.' Mexico was this imagined place, but [my brother and I] were still so Mexican in our identity… We really carried Mexico with us," Gutierrez said to conference attendees.

As Boyle outlines, migration stories and their sights, sounds, and interweaving timelines do not align with bite-sized mainstream narratives. Gutierrez's story fundamentally challenges mainstream conceptions of migration with memories that seem to defy temporal and physical boundaries. Living in a border town meant that she had access to intertwining cultures that are supposed to be separate. Blending Mexican heritage into her lived experience in America meant that the memory of places long left behind shaped her upbringing in real time.

"Every forced migration erases more than presence. It erases memory unless we fight to preserve it… [These are] more than just stories of displacement, but of the worlds that existed before and after it," Gutierrez concluded.

Other panelists also challenged the audience to consider parts of migration stories that are often left out of mainstream narratives. Among them was KeruBo-Ogoti Webster, a Kenya-born, Winooski-based Afro-jazz vocalist, songwriter and storyteller who collaborates with the Alliance of Africans Living in Vermont to connect African migrants with local support such as legal, interpretation, and youth programming services. Webster emphasized the importance of understanding migrant experiences beyond the moment of arrival.

"[Ask] the deeper questions… what do these people deserve now that they are part of the fabric of Americans? When we are studying about [migrants], our focus is skewed because it is being led by someone with a broader agenda," Webster said.

Fiori Berhane, panelist and professor of anthropology from the University of Southern California, expanded on the need to examine the historical dimensions of migration. She spoke to conference-goers about migrations out of the East-African country of Eritrea, the first Italian colony and most-militarized country in the world. Using primary source interviews, Berhane read out conversations conducted with Eritrean migrants.

"In a talk like today's where there's migrant activists, students and the general public, I'm trying to get at a basic sketch of what's going on, of memories of home… I want to center the voices of the people that I work with… For a general public that is much more important than the theoretical insights that I would share with other anthropologists or academics," Berhane said in an interview with The Campus.

The conference was grounded in its effort to turn these conversations into activism. Keeping these discussion themes at the forefront, the combination of panelists, students, and organizers, reconciled the role of academia and activism.

Connecting academia with action, the event concluded with a "Community Open House" in which the following organizations tabled and fundraised: Migrant Justice at Middlebury, Middlebury Students for Justice in Palestine, Vermont Coalition for Palestinian Liberation, Vermont Folklife, Clemons Family Farm, the Vermont Afghan Alliance, Art Lords, the Alliance of Africans Living in Vermont, Open Door Clinic, FreeHer Vermont and the Henry Sheldon Museum.

Victoria Fawcett '26, a student on the steering committee for the conference and a Spanish-to-English medical translator at the Open Door Clinic, commented on how the college's connection to migration justice issues is often overlooked.

"We go to the dining hall, we drink the milk, we eat the yogurt, but we forget about who the people are organizing the cows, producing the milk, and providing it, and honestly, risking their lives every day to do that," Fawcett said.

Supporting the Milk with Dignity campaign, as shared by Balcazar and Canedo, is one concrete way in which Middlebury students can join the fight for migrant justice in our community. Check out www.migrantjustice.net to help push the national grocery chains like Hannafords to join this program overseen by the Milk with Dignity Standards Council for dignified working conditions for our migrant neighbors.

Elizabeth Camarillo Gutierrez, author of My Side of the River, describes how her parents' self-deportation changed her family's life.

Student and faculty organizers, such as Victoria Fawcett '26, and participants discuss and engage over Doña Alejandra Tacos.

COURTESY PHOTOS / YAHYA RAHHAWI

Fiori Berhane, professor of Anthropology at the University of Southern California describes the dire political conditions in Eritrea leading to people seeking migration.

Faculty and student organizers and participants listened attentively in BiHall 216.